

EDITOR'S COMMENT

The development sector has always been a dynamic one, witness to continuous change, innovation and reinvention. This includes changes in terminology for different facets of development over different time frames, for example, from 'rural development' to 'community development' to 'poverty alleviation' to 'poverty reduction.' In the disability sector, an example of changes in terminology is from 'vocational rehabilitation' to 'economic rehabilitation' to 'income generation' to 'livelihoods'. Some of these changes in terminology reflect the change in underlying ideology or principles, while some others are influenced by what is considered 'politically correct' at that point in time.

The one term that has stood the test of time in the disability sector is community-based rehabilitation (CBR). CBR is considered as the most significant innovation over the last quarter century for people with disabilities, especially for those in rural areas in developing countries. The positive benefits of CBR are documented in evaluation studies from different countries. The term 'CBR' is now a strong brand in itself, recognised all over the world. It is arguably the only 'brand' that has survived for such a long time in the development sector. That is why it seems unfortunate that there are moves today to change the name of community-based rehabilitation, because some groups in the disability sector do not consider it 'politically correct' to include the word 'rehabilitation' in the term.

Regardless of what is 'politically correct', CBR today is understood by most stakeholders in the disability sector as a strategy to promote inclusion, rights and equal opportunities for people with disabilities. Measures for 'rehabilitation' and 'impairment correction' are an equally important part of CBR, especially from a developing country perspective where there are still areas with minimal services for people with disabilities. Apart from vertical CBR programmes, the twin track approach, which promotes inclusive development while addressing particular needs of people with disabilities, is also an increasingly accepted strategy. This approach is becoming evident in current CBR trends, where CBR projects address the special needs of people with disabilities, and promote their inclusion in all mainstream development processes and activities.

No doubt there are CBR practitioners in some parts of the developing world who still see it as only a service delivery, 'impairment correction' approach, but this is not reason enough to

discard the term. Besides, changing the name of CBR into anything else will only lead to confusion, and in the long run, deprive people with disabilities in developing countries of the positive outcomes they get through CBR projects.

What is needed is education - for older CBR practitioners and for groups that are agitating for a name change - on the developments, current understanding and practice related to the term CBR, and to retain the same term that is well recognised and accepted in the disability sector in developing countries. Otherwise we are in danger of losing the only approach that is still seen as the most appropriate one for these countries and the only significant brand that the disability sector from developing countries can be proud of at present.

The APDRJ team wishes its readers a Happy New Year!

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